MEMORIAL

OF

President James A. Garfield.

BY

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OF

PRESIDENT JAMES A. GARFIELD.

BORN, Nov. 19, 1831; SHOT, July 2, 1881; DIED, Sept. 19, 1881.

II SAMUEL III: 34 and 38.—"Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him."

"And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"

Abner, son of Ner, after friendly consultation with King David, going home in peace, was recalled by Joab, and treacherously slain.

King David, in broken words, voiced the universal sorrow: "Thy hands — not bound; thy feet — not brought into fetters.—As one falls before the sons of wickedness, so fellest thou. *And all the people wept again over him.*"

When they would urge David "to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down."

"And the king said unto his servants, *Know ye not* that there is a *prince* and a *great man fallen this day* in Israel?"

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One far superior to Abner, son of Ner, has fallen by the hand of violence. "Prince" among army-leaders, by his distinguished military ability; "great man," "by reason of his lofty qualities of character and virtues, his power of action, his courage, his honorable self-conquest": all that has been written of the one has been more than fulfilled in the life of the other.

Our Savior's words are my authority: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding *he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*"

James A. Garfield, servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, honest believer and faithful disciple "in the kingdom of heaven," and not least, stands on a higher plane than the Jewish warrior, over whom King David and all the people wept. There is nothing of duplicity in his career, nothing to make us blush. New Testament christianity has produced a man of purer moral sense, nobler endowments—and all crowned with loyal devotion to his God.

On a bright morning in July, in full manly vigor, anxiety over his beloved companion removed, his face turned toward his chosen College home, accompanied by his trusted friend, he drove through the streets of Washington to the railroad station with the same sense of security that any American citizen is glad to cherish. *There* the base assassin takes advantage of time and place, comes stealthily near, and by cruel aim reaches the sacred life.

Joab had some excuse—poor enough—to avenge a brother's death; but this modern villain, "son of Belial," *none.* In a time of peace, with no exciting

cause, from his own wicked heart, he carried out the long-devised plan of vilest treachery.

I cannot speak too strong words of fitting condemnation. Seeming indifference thereto would render one almost a partaker in that guilt. In all our sorrow to-day for the great loss, in all our tenderness and fervent prayers for that bereaved wife and children, *there will be*, *there must be* the element of righteous indignation. Had President Garfield been taken from us by disease, or what we call accident, then we should have bowed in reverent submission to God. But manly honor and christian fidelity now demand "that, in every way, by word, deed, and behavior, one should set forth" his reprobation and abhorrence of that grossest crime. "For all the people and all Israel understood that day *that it was not of the king* to slay Abner, the son of Ner."

For *eighty days* the baptism of sorrow and anxiety, baptism of prayer and earnest longing for sparing mercy, has been upon us. We have stood very near, almost within the veil. We have eagerly taken in tidings cheering or discouraging; we have been glad to believe our President had the best medical skill, the most faithful attendants, all that human affection could devise or afford. May God bless all that band of physicians, all those men and women that have served him with such unwearied effort. One nearest his heart, chosen companion, *next* to the Lord his best beloved, has given us an undying example of tenderness and fortitude combined. When she held closely by him in the first shock, the reaction, the swift-coming alternation of hope and fear, the removal from sultry, poisoned atmosphere to the cool breezes of ocean; hoping

bravely, praying earnestly, until that last interview, sacred forever; and then as the life had gone out, from her broken heart came the utterance: "Why was this cruel wrong forced upon me?"—in all this we shared, and reiterate the words to-day: "Why this cruel wrong" forced upon us?

There is no answer yet, on the human side. It may come, it may be near; or it may be that passing years shall reveal how this crime shall bring about a needed change. Just now we can only join in the supplication, the fitly chosen, divinely directed notes of the funeral dirge: "Nearer, my God, to thee."

Not many months since, Lord Beaconsfield, an English statesman, died. Alexander, "Emperor of all the Russias," fell by plotting violence. But neither of these touched the whole civilized world with the sense of personal loss. Around him, President of the United States; around him, James A. Garfield, the noble man, have been drawn sorrowing, sympathizing nations of Europe and Asia, Africa and Australia, even to the ends of the earth. This will never be forgotten. The brotherhood of humanity seems more a reality. The costly sacrifice has cemented the bond. "God bless Queen Victoria;" we can all join in that right *loyally* now; the noble woman who has sent such tender messages to her bereaved compeer. "God bless England, Scotland, Ireland, and all the provinces" —that also springs from our lips. Every tolling bell in old ivy-clad cathedral, parish church, or lowly chapel; every bared head and sorrowing heart; every message of sympathy speeding to our ears, have stirred unwonted chords, and bound us in closer ties.

Our national life has felt a new impulse. Party

lines and party names have been for a season obliterated. We have not cared to ask, we have not liked to hear, whether one voted for James A. Garfield or not. We have been *one* in patriotic anxiety; we *are* to-day *one* in sorrow and loving remembrance. Southern warmth and affection have been poured out toward the man just and true to them. East and West, North and South, one nation *now*, united in the great loss, look up to God for His guiding hand and sustaining strength. The tenderness of our govermental relations is made manifest. Emperor nor crowned king could be loved more than President Garfield; *nor quite in the same way*. A worthy son of the people, from our ranks, by hearty choice, elevated to the highest place, has been more to us than if born in any line of royal succession. High expectations had been cherished. We believed that he intended to serve the whole nation. His work was but just planned. At the crown of his half-century's training and experience, in the full vigor of manhood, with such obviously honest intention and sincerity of purpose, we had every reason to thank God, who had given him to us.

In lamenting such a loss, we are brought face to face with serious questions concerning great issues. Wherein is our civilization faulty? Or our political system weak? Or our moral sense blunted? Or our safeguards wanting?

Say "that such a crime may be expected in Russia, Turkey; a cause for violent hatred in despotism"—but *here* in Republican America! Abraham Lincoln fell a martyr when we had just passed through a civil war and long bloody strife. But what has brought this upon us—the cold-blooded murder of our now sainted

Garfield? A lunatic, not responsible? No, not that! A disappointed office-seeker; a vain, conceited, despicable fellow, plague and disgrace of relatives; unreliable, dishonest, pretentious? Yes, all that! For he plotted the vile deed, and carried it out deliberately, *expecting to live and profit by it.*

False ideas and false teaching concerning criminals have become increasingly current. Mercy and justice have been shamefully perverted. Sentimental sympathy has been styled christianity. Delays of trial, possibilities of escape, life-imprisonment with good hope of coming pardon, have all helped on to deeds of violence. "Impunity invites to greater crimes." "He is cruel to the innocent, who spares the guilty." These axioms have not been held firmly, and now "assassination, the bitterest fruit," has been borne. Perverted christianity is no true guide. Sentimental dealing with the criminal surely undermines all government, all security for the nation. Before you make a hero of any murderer, take it home to yourself. Look again at the cherished sanctity of your own household; the wife whom you love, the children so dear to you—and see them in a moment all bereft, plunged in deepest sorrow by the hand of an assassin! Again, I say, think of this, before you put the criminal in any position of mistaken tenderness. "He *is* cruel to the innocent who would weakly wish to spare the guilty."

The sacredness of human life is abiding truth. It is blasphemy and falsehood to assert that this rests on Jewish sanction only. While the earth was yet fresh after the destroying deluge, the Lord God commanded Noah, the representative man, the head of the spared human race, and generations before Abraham was

called, saying, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: *for in the image of God* made He man." By this eternal truth, that sacred image shall not be marred, nor the life touched to gratify any passion, however violent; any revenge, however deadly; much less, under the pretence of lunacy, with hope of escape. Our share in public opinion will be measured and tested by our honest acceptance of the divine sanction, which is the only true safeguard of every human soul. Government is of God. "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Blood-revenge has been done away; the son slaying the murderer of his father; and that son in turn to be pursued by the nearest kin. Now by God's ordinance the man of blood shall be taken by the strong arm of government and, after fair trial, lose his forfeited life. Justice and judgment are not empty names. "Thou shalt not kill"—the command repeated on Mount Sinai, intensified by the Lord Jesus Christ in the sermon on the mount—rests forever on the whole human race. *Respect for law* demands that law shall *respect in turn our rights and sacred instincts.* If there be such refinement and amendment that it becomes difficult, almost impossible, to convict the guilty—that becomes a refinement of cruelty, a perversion of justice, the setting aside of what God has commanded. This is no more true to-day than it was months ago, when President Garfield, in full vigor, stood before this nation taking the official oath. But we *feel* it more. The truth is in stronger light. If there be no way to reach the assassin, then

the government has failed at a vital point, law is trifling, and the path toward confusion and mob violence opens up. It must not be for revenge, nor in anger, nor swayed by excitement, nor in any spirit that will not stand the true test of divine truth, that we think of these things, or do our part in shaping public opinion. *But this crowds upon me as the most important lesson now:* That a needed check shall be given to the constantly increasing career of crime; and that headstrong, wicked men *shall know* that punishment is sure to be visited upon them. This must be made so plain that men of violence *shall not mistake.*

We believe "all men are created free and equal." In one sense, every life has the same worth. In another sense, position and relation to the common interest must be taken into account. The death of President Garfield has more significance than that of a private citizen, because he stood the representative head of our government. As such the civilized world regarded him, and as such to-day unites in our sorrow. Say, he was a man of worth, attainment, influence, endowment, without any regard to his station. Yes, all true, thank God. But such a man, "President of these United States," had necessarily become more important, more necessary. When the assassin aimed at him, he was endeavoring to injure and destroy a life with which we had become inseparably connected by the guiding hand of God. If we have no name yet to specify this crime and measure its guilt, then it does behoove our statesmen and law-makers to produce the right term. Call it treason, high treason, intensest treachery, disloyalty in first degree—any right, strong word they please, and then affix the penalty that shall

correspond. Let the would-be-murderer understand that the strong arm of government, supported by the strong-centered opinion of this great people, intends to protect surely the man whom they have chosen. We do not desire body-guards for our President, nor any secret police and detectives; but that he shall be one of us without royal display, or despotic attendance, —a man beloved, cherished, and made secure by right enactments. Twice now assassination has made this imperative.

It is in this line, but altogether secondary, that the demand for civil-service reform must be made. Political life can only be purified by reformation of social, national life. Government ordained of God is for the good of the whole, not for any one man, or any select few. Party spirit easily passes over into personal hatred and bitterness. The call for *the best men* may be only a pretence, and the real meaning, "places for those who think, act, and vote as I do." We do not look for perfection, but we have the right to demand of our statesmen not only honesty, integrity, ability, but careful avoidance of all violent language, and all expressions that may tend to excite the ungoverned passions of office-seeking victims. Such words spoken, written, printed, are not without deadly effect when they fall upon the ear and heart of those ready to abuse and pervert.

The increasing influence of the press is to be cordially recognized. It has become more and more a necessity in the months of trial. Eagerly we have read the tidings day by day, thought over carefully the comments, and read with quickened pulse the sentences that bear impress of true patriotism. During the

past week, especially, there have come to us many lessons that should not be forgotten. Written with evident emotion, hearts beating plainly in the lines, warm, strong, well-chosen words, anticipating much that can be said to-day, true gratitude requires this acknowledgment of such lessons. In so far as these shall continue, and the right spirit prevail, let us all pray, "May God sanctify and bless this power of the press for good." I do not expect Millennial influence and control just yet. Reaction may come. But we have in the word of God that system of eternal truth that must be made the test of what we think, speak, read, or hear. We are American citizens, and more. We are going right on into eternity — there all our lives to be passed upon; there to find the real end and issue of this probation.

The baptism of sorrow and prayer has not been in vain. Under its sacred, softening influences, President Arthur has been preparing for his solemn responsibility. All classes and parties express one desire, that he shall carry on the work so well begun. It is now time for generous confidence and hearty support. It is now the *set time* for earnest prayer to God that he may be protected, guided, and made the true leader of this nation for good. If bitterness, harshness, reckless utterances pass away; if the new era in political, national life has dawned, then we shall recognize another interposition of our God.

Home-life, home-influence, have assumed sacred importance. The lessons are varied. Parents and children, sons and daughters, are all directly concerned. When the career of Gen. Garfield was written as a so-called "campaign document," it had special attraction.

But now we read it anew, and all unite in the absorbing interest. A little home in Ohio; a widow struggling with poverty, but determined to keep her children about her; obedience required of them; "nurture and admonition in the Lord" on her part—that brave woman was then laying the foundations of character to be eternal. We may not overlook this. The man owes much to the mother who loves him, guides him, prays over him, and ever seeks to hold him fast in divine truth. God has blessed that faithful mother. God has heard her prayers, and crowned her faith. In all the honors to which her beloved son attained, she had full share; and every effort, needed sacrifice, has been recompensed. "*My boy, you know*"—"*my James*"—are right words for her. And when the venerable, tottering form bows over the casket to-morrow, bidding good-bye to the precious dust, from uncounted thousands will spring the tearful, sympathizing prayer, "O God of the widow, keep in thine own care this faithful mother."

Labor has received another signal mark of respect. James A. Garfield, the hard toiling boy, the industrious young man, earning his own support, laying up little by little for his education, and overcoming obstacles by frugality and constant application, stands before all boys and young men a cheering example. The little brown school-house, where he first received the taste for knowledge—where in due time he stood as teacher—the pupils who soon learned to love him; leader in manly thoughts and manly sport; associations well known to all of us—that school-house is an American palace; for in such lowly places sovereigns are taught and trained. All teachers are proud to claim relation-

ship to this man; and all honor to those who are to-day faithfully instructing boys and girls who shall in turn be the honored men and women of our land.

I do not wonder that Williams College so devotedly cherishes the man that received his higher education there. Without any ignoble feeling, every college and every college graduate shares in the high regard, and is glad that such a place was open to the young western applicant. Mark Hopkins—then president—one of the noblest men, welcomed him cordially, and soon came to love him specially. I dare not imagine all that will come to Mark Hopkins in the next world, all the rich reward to the man of missionary zeal, speaking year by year strong, inspiring words at the great assemblies of the American Board, cheering on every man and woman going forth to the work; training class after class of young men in Williams College; a power in the Church of Christ; his great ability and attainments in science consecrated to his Lord; but I believe, to-day as he looks back over his long life, there is no richer memory than what he was enabled to do in the training of James A. Garfield.

Another lesson is marked: Rank, position, success, influence, are attained by hard work, fidelity, honesty, constant regard to what is right and good. Before such a man, however lowly-born, there are no insurmountable walls. Garfield, president of Hiram College then struggling for existence; in turn helping on young men toward education; preaching earnestly the Gospel of Jesus Christ; giving up all to serve his country on the battle-field; taking the large band of students and neighbors with him; studying maps and charts of the country menaced or occupied by the

enemy; successful in driving out the rebel force, and that with a smaller number of his own; rising rapidly in military rank; urged, by brave men at the front and by President Lincoln himself, to enter Congress because specially prepared for service there; in the House of Representatives, leader in military affairs, in appropriations, in our system of finance: passing on to the Senate a vigorous worker, untiring reader and thinker; a man of influence wide and increasing; urging the nomination of his tried friend, John Sherman, until the hour when his own name is caught up, and the honor falls quickly upon himself: modest and manly through the campaign; constantly winning adherents; becoming the choice of the people; and at last standing President of the United States: *This* is the poor boy, widow's son, worker, teacher, student, warrior, statesman; and it was right the old mother should stand by him when he took the official oath as President and receive the first greeting.

Homes and home life are specially sacred. But in this great, prolonged trial, we have come to know the White House family as our own. I would speak with utmost delicacy and chastened tenderness. The one who had been an early acquaintance, fellow-student and teacher; the loving wife whose influence was felt by the young men of Hiram College; who gave her husband to the war; who shared in all his cares and anxieties; keeping the home bright; who has made the nation and world proud of such an example, has had a large share in President Garfield's attainments and success. When she came from Long Branch, scarcely recovered from threatening disease, and the husband's eye brightened, and his lips spoke the en-

dearing pet name, all our hearts throbbed with delight, that now she was near to care for her wounded husband. The daily bulletins—" Mrs. Garfield is by his bedside ; " " she is showing great fortitude ; " calm, composed, quickly attentive, always hopeful—these we read with ever-renewed gratitude to God. And now that sorely-bereaved wife draws all near to her, as she manifests such faith in God, and such holy submission to His will. She has become the nation's sacred charge—not only for the well-deserved tribute of support, but to be cherished in our hearts with fervent unceasing prayer. " Harry " and " James," " Abram " and " Irvin "—may God bless those fatherless boys, and lead them on to high positions of usefulness, as He led their father ; " Mollie," only daughter, tenderly beloved, her father's companion, bringing many a ray of cheering sunshine to his bedside all the long weeks of suffering—Oh, what a cruel wrong has been thrust upon all of them ! Aged mother, devoted wife, fatherless children, bereaved brothers and sisters—all darkened in sorrow by the hand of a desperate villain !

It will be a day of sadness on the morrow. The vast multitude at Cleveland, thronging to the burial, will only be representatives of the uncounted millions in this land, and in other lands, who mourn as those that cannot be comforted. But the Lord Jesus Christ will be near to the desolate family ; to the afflicted people. We are not in despair. We mourn not without hope. With undiminished faith we believe in God. The volume of petition and importunate supplication has not been in vain. We read anew " of the angel at the altar above, having a *golden censer* and *much incense* given him, that he should add it to the prayers

of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne." The martyr cry has had urgent increase: "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Years, ages, speed on, and God only knows the end. But we believe in Him, that "not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice," and that He will keep in eternal safety all that trust in Him. We have been learning, we are *now* learning more than ever, the meaning of that agonizing prayer in Gethsemane—"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt,"—thrice-repeated, in the same words, and yet the answer came in the full will of God, in the completed purpose, in the glorious work of our redemption accomplished. If in any sense we have learned intercessory petition during months past; if we have been brought nearer to our Lord, let us now draw closer, as we say with sorrowing hearts, drinking the bitter cup—"Thy will, O God, be done." In our homes, in all our public assemblies, in every manifestation of bereavement, in all the tributes we pay to our martyred President, this must be firmly held: "God over all, blessed forever," will lead us, keep us—this great nation, the sorely-smitten family, and in His own good time we shall read the meaning of this mystery.

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